

Minorities at greater risk for kidney disease

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WALTHAM, MA – Certain ethnic minorities, including African Americans and Hispanics, are at a higher risk than the general population for developing potentially life-threatening chronic kidney disease (CKD), which has been linked to higher rates of diabetes and high blood pressure, according to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF).

During National Kidney Month in March, Fresenius Medical Care North America (FMCNA), the world's largest integrated provider of products and services for individuals undergoing dialysis because of chronic kidney failure, is encouraging people to pay attention to their risk factors and become educated about kidney disease.

Chronic kidney disease is a progressive, usually permanent loss of kidney function that affects more than 26 million Americans, according to the NKF. When CKD leads to kidney failure, or end stage renal disease (ESRD), the only treatments are a kidney transplant or dialysis.

African, Asian, Hispanic and Native Americans are at higher risk than the general population for developing kidney disease because they also tend to have higher rates of diabetes and high blood pressure, the top two causes of kidney disease, according to the NKF.

Some facts (Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, NIDDK):

- African Americans are nearly four times more likely to develop kidney failure than white Americans.
- Native Americans have nearly three times the risk of kidney failure compared to white Americans.
- Hispanic Americans have nearly twice the risk of kidney failure compared to non-Hispanic white Americans.

“People with kidney disease may not have symptoms until the disease is at an advanced stage and they are close to requiring treatment with either dialysis or a kidney transplant,” says Franklin W. Maddux, M.D., FACP, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Information Officer at Fresenius Medical Care North America. “We encourage anyone with risk factors for kidney disease to educate themselves about chronic kidney disease and take steps to control the conditions that can lead to kidney failure.”

Early detection and treatment can help prevent further kidney damage and slow the progression of kidney disease, according to the NIDDK's National Kidney Disease Education Program. FMCNA recommends that people in these at-risk groups get regular screenings for high blood pressure and diabetes plus make changes to diet and exercise to help reduce their risk of progressive kidney disease.

FMCNA also offers Treatment Options Program (TOPs) educational sessions, which are free and open to the public. TOPs classes provide information about kidney disease management and the treatments available when CKD leads to kidney failure. During National Kidney Month, the company is hosting 200 TOPs sessions nationwide. To find a class near you this month or

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throughout the year, call toll-free 1-877-TOPS-LIFE (1-877-867-7543) or visit www.ultracare-dialysis.com/TOPS (in English and Spanish).

Dialysis is a life-sustaining process that cleans waste products from the blood, removes extra fluids, and controls the body's chemistry when a person's kidneys fail. Dialysis patients typically require treatment on an ongoing basis unless they receive a kidney transplant.